

Loyalty Activity

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER (Exploration, 20 minutes)

Share this story as a lesson in American history.
Conclude by reading “The Star-Spangled Banner” or singing it with music.

BOOM! BOOM! CABOOOM!! Rockets lit up the sky as cannons fired shot after shot! The air was thick with smoke as Francis Scott Key stood amidst the frenzied activity of many sailors. He struggled against the rocking of the ship and strained his eyes to see through the smoke. He could barely see the outline of a flag waving in the wind. But as the night grew darker, the outline faded into blackness.

It was September 13, 1814. Great Britain and the United States had been at war for two years. A fleet of British ships were now in the harbor outside of Baltimore. The only thing that stood between the British fleet and the American people in Baltimore was Fort McHenry, where a 30-foot American flag waved overhead.

Francis Scott Key was engaged in his own battle that day. Under truce, he boarded one of the British ships to beg for the life of a friend who was taken prisoner unjustly. When the captain heard the truth, he freed Mr. Key's friend but wouldn't let the men go until after the battle. Stuck onboard, Francis and his friend watched helplessly as the British blasted Fort McHenry with cannon fire.

Francis spent a sleepless night in suspense. One thought raced through his mind: “Would Fort McHenry be able to stand?” When the cannons finally stopped, the night was dark, and there was no way of knowing if the flag still flew over Fort McHenry. Francis could do nothing but wait.

As the first rays of sunlight peeked through the clouds, Francis and his friend looked across the water. Through the mist and the fog they saw the American flag waving in the breeze. The two men jumped for joy and shouted, “The flag! Our flag—it's still there!”

Francis quickly pulled out a pen and started writing lyrics to a song that eventually became known as The Star-Spangled Banner. In 1931, it became the official national anthem of the United States of America.



Verse One:

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Verse Two:

On the shore dimly seen through the mist of the deep
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream;
'Tis the star-spangled banner—O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Verse Three:

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country shall leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave;
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!

Verse Four:

O thus be it ever when free men shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto—“In God is our trust!”
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!